

Statement of
Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA)
Press Conference on Introduction of
Energy Consumer Relief Act of 2005
Thursday, December 8, 2005

Thank you.

Today, Representatives Brian Higgins, Rosa DeLauro and I are introducing the Energy Consumer Relief Act of 2005. Our bill would repeal many of the tax breaks that were recently given to big oil companies in the Republican energy bill. It would also suspend all royalty relief for the oil companies so long as oil and natural gas prices remain high. We would then use the increased revenues coming into the Treasury to increase funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Two days ago, the Bush Administration released its December *Short Term Energy Outlook*, which showed that for millions of families trying to heat their homes this winter, the outlook is one of crisis. Home heating prices are forecast to be significantly higher than last year. Households using natural gas to heat their homes are predicted to pay 38 percent more than last winter, translating into an average increase of \$281. Households using home heating oil are expected to pay 21 percent more than last winter, an average increase of \$255.

This impending home heating crisis is the predictable result of The Bush Administration's policy to 'leave no oil company behind' when it comes to special tax breaks and regulatory subsidies and to instead leave low-income families and seniors out in the cold this winter.

Through the first three quarters of this year, the top five oil companies have recorded profits of \$81 billion dollars. Exxon and Shell recently reported third quarter profits that were \$2 and \$3 billion more than the greatest quarterly profits we have ever seen, from any company, in the history of the world.

Yet, rather than raise the fees these oil companies pay to drill on the public's land by even a small percentage, or reduce the tax breaks the Congress has given these companies, the Bush Administration has decided to nickel and dime the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, a program that is critical to helping millions of families stay warm this winter.

Last year, 32 million households were eligible for LIHEAP assistance, but only 15 percent of those homes were able to be served with the funding provided. This year, many states are already seeing a record number of applicants for LIHEAP assistance and the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress has underfunded LIHEAP by nearly \$3 billion.

We know that families will skip meals or avoid taking prescription medication so that they can afford to heat their homes. So the choice comes down to this – do we want to force millions of families to give up meals and medication or do we want to ask these big oil companies to give up the millions of dollars in tax breaks they receive to drill on public land.

I believe the choice is clear. Thank you.